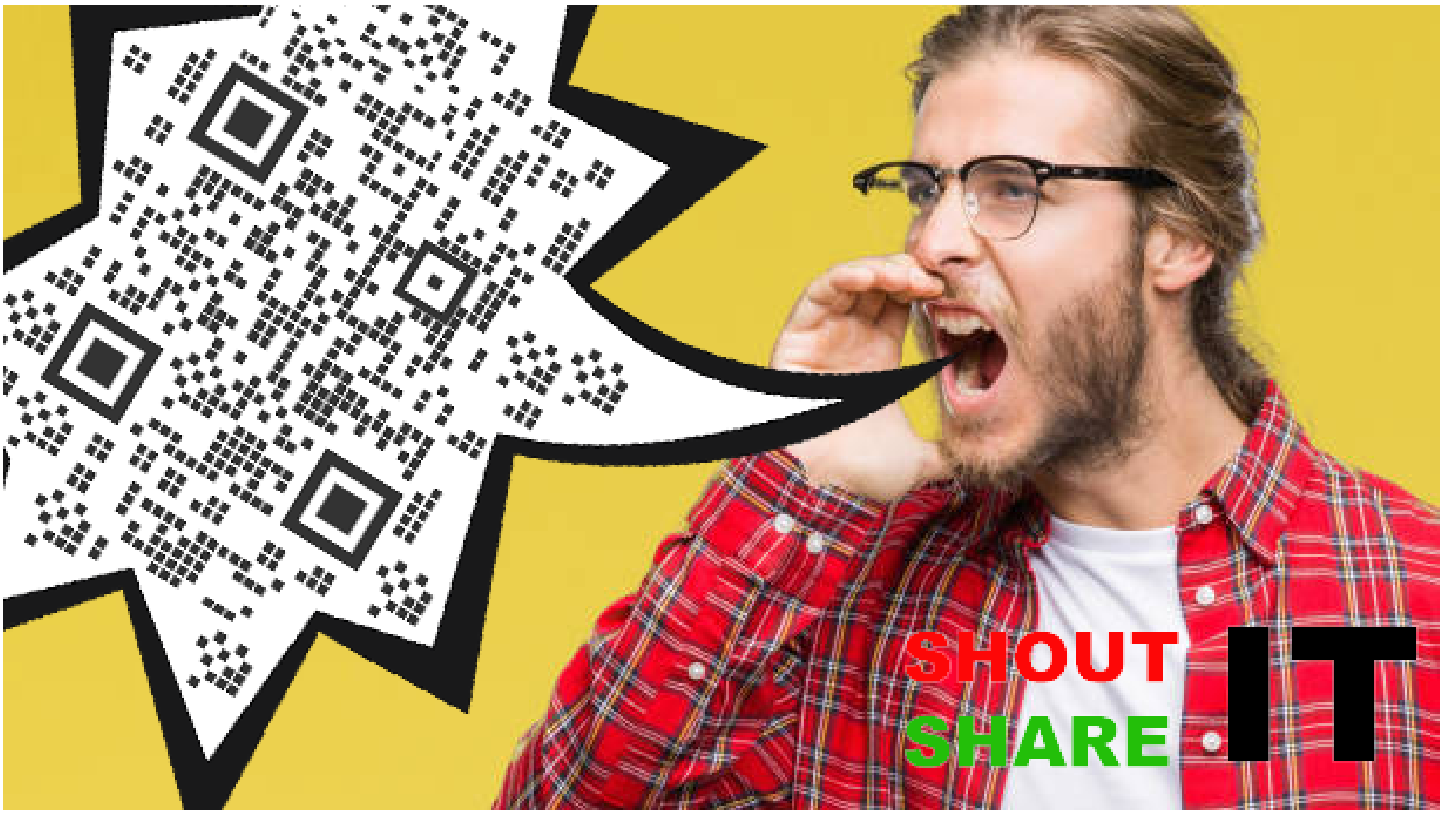
Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP SECRETARIAT

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Mountain Partnership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MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP SECRETARIAT
ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, 2025

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Hunting expedition of the Kazakh people in Mongolia
©Bayar Balgantseren

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NO ESTACIONAR

La Antigua, Guatemala

©CharlieQuezada-CoheteStudio

A MESSAGE FROM THE MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP SECRETARIAT COORDINATOR

Rosalaura Romeo
©Antonella Di Girolamo

As we reflect on 2024, we are proud of the achievements we've made together in advancing the Mountain Partnership's mission worldwide. Through our collective efforts, we have worked to strengthen mountain livelihoods, protect vital ecosystems and bring the needs of mountains to the global stage.

This year, we made remarkable strides in raising the voice of mountains in the global climate conversation. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a process was launched to highlight mountains, marked by the first-ever SBSTA 60 Expert Dialogue on Mountains and Climate Change, while the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) 29 saw more than 30 mountain-focused events. Additionally, at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 16 and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP 16, mountain-related events played a key role in mainstreaming mountain issues across the three United Nations Rio Conventions, underscoring the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation in mountains. There is an opportunity to build on this momentum at UNFCCC COP 30 in Belém, Brazil in November 2025.

The protection of glaciers, as vital sources of water and livelihoods for the planet, remains a priority. In 2024, in close collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), we started to promote observance of the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation 2025 and to lead the Global Campaign to propel these white giants into greater global focus and action.

Our training courses, such as the International Programme on Research and Training on Sustainable Management of Mountain Areas (IPROMO) and GROW - Agrobiodiversity in a Changing Climate, allowed many participants from around the world to delve deeper into sustainable mountain issues, while also zooming in on agrobiodiversity and the sustainable management of resources. Our focus on youth through the Mountain Youth Hub ensures that the next generation of leaders has a place at the table, with their voices heard and their ideas acted upon.

On the ground, our efforts to improve the livelihoods of mountain communities are making a real difference. Through the Business Incubator and Accelerator (BIA), we supported more than 140 producer organizations, positively impacting more than 55 000 farmers – 60 per cent of whom are women. This initiative continues to empower communities, strengthen economies and create opportunities for sustainable growth.

In Guatemala, our collaboration with Italian designer Vivia Ferragamo and the women-led social enterprise Wakami is an example of how innovative partnerships can foster economic growth while preserving cultural traditions. The Fashion for Fragile Ecosystems project has created both a sustainable business model and a powerful narrative for the value of craftsmanship, with recognition from Japan World Expo 2025.

International Mountain Day (IMD) 2024 highlighted the importance of blending innovation with tradition. Under the theme “Mountain solutions for a sustainable future – innovation, adaptation, and youth”, we emphasized the critical role of mountain communities in addressing climate change. Together with MP Members and FAO colleagues we launched *Promoting innovation and tradition: solutions for climate change adaptation in mountains*, a publication that highlights how mountains can offer solutions to the climate crisis while honouring local knowledge. The IMD event, held at FAO’s Rome headquarters, celebrated the rich flavours of mountain regions, showcasing the produce of Slow Food mountain producers. Additionally, the inaugural Mountain Future Award 2024, generously sponsored by our Members, selected three exceptional mountain champions for their contribution to innovation, adaptation and youth in mountains.

In 2025, the mission of the Mountain Partnership continues towards amplifying mountain voices, further mainstreaming mountain issues in global fora and advocating for a unified approach within our diverse and dynamic partnership.

Rosalaura Romeo
Mountain Partnership Secretariat Coordinator

#MOUNTAIN FOREST

Elevating the mountain agenda: a global call to action

High-level speakers at UNFF19
©Government of Kyrgyzstan

The Mountain Partnership Secretariat (MPS) and its dynamic members are playing a key role in advancing efforts to support the development of mountains and empower mountain communities. Under the Global Framework for the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023–2027, proposed by the Government of Kyrgyzstan and sponsored by 110 governments, the Mountain Partnership is enhancing the international community’s awareness of issues affecting mountain countries and providing new impetus to address the challenges.

In 2024, at the request of FAO Council 174, the MPS, in collaboration with FAO technical units and decentralized offices, developed the Global Action Plan on Mountain Regions’ Development. Anchored in the framework for the Five Years of Action, this plan serves as a strategic guide for MP Members to implement initiatives that foster sustainable development in mountain regions. It addresses critical issues such as food insecurity, climate change, land degradation and socioeconomic inequalities, while emphasizing the broader implications of climate change for mountain ecosystems and the global community.

Organized within the framework of the Five Years of Action, on 10 May 2024 the Governments of Italy, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal, in collaboration with the UN Group of Friends for Mountains, hosted a side event at the 19th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF19) in New York. The event emphasized the pivotal role of mountains and their forests for global sustainable development. Discussions highlighted the challenges facing mountain regions and how concrete action in mountains can address global issues related to climate change, biodiversity loss and desertification.

Mountain countries, already on the frontlines of the global climate crisis, bear disproportionate climate change burdens. That was the message from the Prime Minister of Nepal Pushpa Kamal Dahal, addressing a two-day international expert dialogue on “Mountain, People, and Climate Change” in Kathmandu from 22 to 23 May 2024. The dialogue focused on the impact of climate change on mountain regions and the urgent need for a unified mountain voice to address the challenges. Nepal played a leading role in convening this significant dialogue, driving critical discussions and issuing an urgent call for action. The event brought together more than 250 participants from 23 countries, including government officials, climate scientists, researchers and global stakeholders, to discuss the impacts of climate change on mountains and their repercussions on ecosystem services, including those of low-lying countries.

United Nations
Climate Change Conference
Bonn, Germany

Participants at SBSTA60
©Rocío Melina García

Mountains and climate change dialogue

The first-ever Expert Dialogue on Mountains and Climate Change convened by the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the UNFCCC during its 60th session marked a milestone in advancing global recognition of mountain regions in climate discussions. Held in Bonn, Germany on 5 June 2024, the dialogue was a direct outcome of the first Global Stocktake in 2023, which underscored the need for focused discussions on mountain-specific climate challenges.

The Expert Dialogue provided a critical platform to highlight the importance of mountain regions in the global water cycle, the severe impacts of climate change – including glacier loss, shrinking snow cover and increased flood events – and the pressing need to bridge data and research gaps on issues such as mountain medicinal plants and invasive alien species. Discussions also explored the role of citizen science in mapping water springs, Indigenous Peoples' deep connections with mountain ecosystems, and the necessity of transboundary collaboration to accelerate adaptation efforts.

An event aimed at strengthening political support for the dialogue was held on the sidelines of SBSTA 60, entitled "Mobilizing the MP countries for addressing climate change". The meeting was hosted by the Government of Andorra, in collaboration with the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in the framework of the MP, and marked another important step in efforts to increase the visibility of mountain-related issues within the UNFCCC.

United Nations Climate Change
Mobilizing the Mountain Partnership countries for addressing climate change
Bonn Room, SBSTA 60, Bonn, Germany
Tuesday, 4 June 2024 at 16.15 - 17.30 CEST
Govern d'Andorra
ICIMOD

Side event at SBSTA 60 in Bonn, Germany
©Adrià Verges Aleix

Mainstreaming mountains in the three UN Rio Conventions

Three global agreements that were adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit – the UNFCCC, the UNCCD and the CBD – are interlinked in their work to address issues related to land, climate and biodiversity. The year 2024 saw advances in efforts to ensure that all three conventions include mountains in their agendas.

Reforestation initiative in Afghanistan's Laghman Province
©FAO/Sahil

Mountains at the heart of biodiversity and climate action

As climate pressures mount, the intersection of biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation in mountain regions took centre stage at COP 16, held 21 October to 1 November 2024 in Cali, Colombia. The Andean Mountain Initiative (AMI), with MP Member CONDESAN serving as its technical secretary, led an event on “Global Mountain Governance: Importance of creating synergy between biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation”, which saw the participation of the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention, the CBD, the United Nations Environment Programme and various governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Highlighting the essential role played by mountains in hosting biodiversity, providing vital ecosystem services and regulating climate, COP 16 President and Colombia’s former Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development Susana Muhamad warned that these fragile environments are facing unprecedented threats from climate change, deforestation and unsustainable land-use practices.

Drang drnung glacier behind yak in Ladakh, India

©GHE/Paras Loomba

A key outcome of the event was the presentation of a Joint Roadmap “From COP16 in Cali to COP30 in Belem do Pará”, developed by various mountain platforms together with the MP. The roadmap outlines four key proposals for advancing mountain conservation: developing a brief on biodiversity and climate change in mountain ecosystems, creating a strategy with the International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation 2025, strengthening science-policy dialogues and promoting funding opportunities to address biodiversity loss and climate change.

Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
COP16 CALI-COLOMBIA
Ambiente
Side Event
Global mountain governance: importance for building synergies between biodiversity conservation and Climate Change
Campaign AIR For The Health Of The Planet

Participants at COP 16 side event
©Andean Mountain Initiative

The role of mountains in climate change discussions

At UNFCCC COP 29, held in Azerbaijan in November, mountains featured prominently in over 30 events. The MPS and various MP Members, including the Governments of Andorra, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal, the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC), OIKOS Association and the Zero Water Day Partnership, organized events to explore climate-related challenges to mountain regions and some potential solutions. In other COP 29 events, mountains were also prominent, with initiatives that included a presentation by the Alpine Convention of its work as a pioneer of transboundary cooperation, with a commitment to a climate-neutral and resilient Alps by 2050. UNESCO spotlighted the critical state of glaciers at two key events, while daily events at the Cryosphere Pavilion highlighted mountain glaciers, snow, permafrost, ice sheets, sea ice and polar oceans.

Women from the Khinalig community, Azerbaijan

©Chinara Baylar

A landmark declaration presented at COP 29 by the Government of Kyrgyzstan highlighted the devastating impacts of climate change on mountain ecosystems and glaciers. Recognizing the critical role of mountains on a global scale, the declaration calls for urgent and coordinated action to address the challenges that threaten them and the services they provide. Supported by 18 countries, the declaration urges the integration of mountain issues into the UNFCCC agenda, acknowledging their vital role in climate regulation and sustainable development on a global scale, and establishes a set of common goals. These include integrating sustainable mountain development into climate policies, improving climate impact monitoring and enhancing adaptation measures to safeguard mountain communities and ecosystems. The Government of Kyrgyzstan also advocated for the establishment of an annual dialogue to address these critical issues and twice submitted a request for a plenary discussion on mountains and climate change to be included in the UNFCCC COP agenda.

Jyrgalan valley, Kyrgyzstan
©Nurdan Esenbekov

Championing mountain ecosystems in drylands

A side event staged during UNCCD COP 16, held from 2 to 13 December in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, provided a valuable opportunity to focus attention on the importance of mountain ecosystems and mountain agricultural terraces in drylands and to mobilize support for their conservation and sustainable management. Jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the MPS, the session underlined that mountains are home to 1.1 billion people and provide essential goods and services, including over 50 percent of the world's freshwater.

An expert panel discussion highlighted the role of dryland mountains in ensuring food security, biodiversity and water and the scope for sustainable cultural and tourism development. Recommendations included upscaling afforestation and reforestation, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, rehabilitating agricultural terraces, supporting traditional knowledge and encouraging inclusive policies. There was a strong call for strengthening youth participation and promoting the mountain agenda, as well as for encouraging governments to join the MP.

Rosalaura Romeo speaking at UNCCD COP 16
©Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Raising the visibility of glaciers' preservation

Glaciers are essential for regulating the global climate and providing freshwater, supporting billions of people worldwide. However, due to climate change, these vital resources are melting at an alarming rate. In response, the United Nations has declared 2025 as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation (IYGP 2025). This initiative aims to draw global attention to the importance of glaciers, snow and ice in the climate system, as well as the economic, social and environmental impacts of their loss. It also highlights the crucial role of high mountain areas as key sources of freshwater and ecosystem services for communities around the world. For IYGP, the MPS was appointed to lead the task force for the Global Campaign, comprising some 120 experts and advocates. The MPS is collaborating closely with the WMO and UNESCO in supporting countries in glacier preservation efforts and contributing to the development of the communication strategy for the year.

The Government of Tajikistan, in cooperation with UNESCO, hosted the International Glaciers Forum on 10 June as part of the Third High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development, 2018–2028". The MPS joined the Government of France, UNESCO and the WMO in calling for urgent action on glacier preservation. The event marked a key starting point for building momentum towards the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation 2025. It emphasized the critical role of glaciers in water security, their rapid decline due to climate change, and the need for stronger international cooperation, scientific research and financing for their protection. The MPS underscored the

Children playing on artificial glacier in Ladakh region of India

©Acres Of Ice

vulnerability of mountain communities dependent on glaciers for freshwater, advocating for integrated adaptation strategies and reinforcing the global push for glaciers' preservation.

During the conference, on 11 June, the Agency for Hydrometeorology of Tajikistan, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, held a parallel event "Human mobility in the context of climate change in mountainous areas – facts, gaps and priorities". The MPS participated in discussions that explored the growing links between climate change, migration and mountain regions. The event underscored the increasing vulnerability of mountain communities, with climate change accelerating glacier loss and ecosystem disruption, contributing to rising migration rates. Experts called for more data on migration patterns and for coordinated actions to address these challenges through resilient infrastructure and targeted policies to support affected populations.

Peaks of Tajikistan
©Shamir Lalbekov

A call for greater mountain conservation in Baku

The 2nd International Conference on “Mountains: Biodiversity, Landscapes, and Cultures – 2024” hosted by MP Member Western Caspian University in Baku, Azerbaijan, brought together experts from around the world to discuss key topics on mountain sustainability just before the climate talks at COP 29. The conference, attended by the MPS and Members such as the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) and the Association for Nature Conservation Machaon International, focused on four main areas: global mountain biodiversity assessment, global ecological problems, mountain cultures, and mountain tourism and economic impacts. The conference was attended by some 200 participants and concluded with a call to action for stronger international partnerships, innovative solutions and enhanced policy frameworks to protect mountain ecosystems, support local communities and ensure the long-term sustainability of mountain regions worldwide.

Speakers at the 2nd International Conference on “Mountains: Biodiversity, Landscapes, and Cultures

©Western Caspian University

Joint action for the Alps

Collaboration across the Alpine region was on the agenda at the international conference "Joint Action for the Alps – Conserve, Connect, Restore", hosted by the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention from 12 to 14 June in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. The programme included interactive parallel sessions that focused on the three pillars of biodiversity: conservation, connectivity and restoration, fostering knowledge exchange and collective action.

Bringing together some 100 participants, including researchers, policymakers and NGO representatives, the event facilitated discussions on biodiversity conservation, connectivity and restoration. The insights gathered contributed to the Alpine Convention's *Policy brief on Alpine biodiversity*, which was presented at the Alpine Conference in January 2025, laying the foundation for the development of an Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan.

RAMADA
hit alpinea
HOTELS & APARTMENTS

Speakers at the Joint Action for the Alps – Conserve, Connect, Restore conference in Slovenia

©Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, Slovenia

Climate change impact on Andean biodiversity

Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge plays a crucial role in the conservation of Andean ecosystems, offering valuable insights for sustainable management practices. The 12th International Meeting of Andean Knowledge and Practices, organized by MP Member Red de Agroindustria Rural del Perú (REDAR Perú) and RED Andina in Tarma, Peru, brought 120 Indigenous leaders, scientists, academics and development experts from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia to address climate change’s impact on Andean biodiversity. Key topics included the loss of native species, water scarcity and threats to food security. The meeting emphasized the importance of integrating Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge in conservation efforts and advocated for inclusive policies and legal protections to safeguard Andean ecosystems and strengthen community resilience.

Alpaca herd in Tolconi village, Peru

©Petra Dilthey

Advancing mountain economies in Europe

MP Member Euromontana reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable development in mountain areas across Europe at the XIII European Mountain Convention. The event, with the theme “Mountain Economies: Challenges, Opportunities and Solutions”, explored strategies for building resilient, diversified economies in mountainous regions. Areas of focus included encouraging local entrepreneurship, promoting sustainable practices and advancing green economy solutions. The event concluded with a call for stronger policy frameworks and increased investments to support both the economic and environmental sustainability of mountain regions.

Transylvanian landscape in Romania

©Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

Key events in 2024

The following is a selection of key events held in 2024, where the MPS provided support and/or participated, to advocate for mountain causes and people.

World Social Forum (Kathmandu, Nepal; 16–18 February)
Mountain Partnership Steering Committee meeting (virtual; 22 February)
Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee of the Mountain Partnership meeting (virtual: 26 March)
International Mountain Museums Alliance 2024 Assembly and meeting (Turin, Italy; 7 May)
International Dialogue on Mountain, People and Climate (Kathmandu, Nepal; 22–23 May)
SBSTA 60 Expert Dialogue on Mountains and Climate Change (Bonn, Germany; 5 June)
Italian excellence for ethical fashion event at Phygital Sustainability Expo® (Rome, Italy; 5 June)
3rd Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference (Dunshanbe, Tajikistan, 10–13 June)
IPROMO 2024 (Ormea, Italy; 24 June–8 July)
Mountain Partnership Steering Committee meeting (hybrid; 27 June)
Annual Meeting of the Council of Member Countries of the Andean Mountain Initiative (Bogotá, Colombia; 1–5 July)
2nd meeting of the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves (WNMBR) (Andorra; 24–27 September)
Mountain Partnership Steering Committee meeting (hybrid; 26 September)
Terra Madre Salone del Gusto 2024 (Turin, Italy; 26–30 September)
International Conference 2024: Climate-resilient agriculture for sustainable food systems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (Kathmandu, Nepal; 1–3 October)
2nd International Conference "Mountains: Biodiversity, Landscapes and Cultures" (Baku, Azerbaijan; 5–6 November)
GROW – Agrobiodiversity in a changing climate (virtual; 11–22 November)
International Mountain Day event at FAO headquarters (Rome, Italy; 11 December)

Side events

Side event at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) (virtual; 12–14 March)
Side event at United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum (virtual; 17 April)
Side event at United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII 23) (virtual; 23 April)
Side event at the United Nations Forum on Forests (New York; 10 May)
Side event at World Food Forum (virtual; 15 October)
Side event at UNFCCC COP 16 (Cali, Colombia; 23 October)
Side event at UNFCCC COP 29 (Baku, Azerbaijan; 11–22 November)
Side event at UNCCD 16 (Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; 2–13 December)

Turning adaptation, innovation and youth into action

Youth farmers visit a herbs and spices farm in Kamburu, Kenya
©FAO/Luis Tato

Celebrations for International Mountain Day (IMD) 2024 on 11 December achieved significant global outreach, with more than 150 articles and many social media posts published. Events were held around the world by MP Members to mark IMD and highlight this year's theme "Mountain solutions for a sustainable future – innovation, adaptation and youth".

FAO headquarters is transformed into a mountain village

An IMD event organized by the MPS at FAO headquarters in Rome focused on the resilience and ingenuity of mountain communities in addressing the climate crisis and poverty, while conserving biodiversity.

Speakers included Ambassador Olga María Pérez Tuna, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Guatemala to FAO; Ambassador Bruno Archi, Permanent Representative of Italy to FAO; Ambassador Taalai Bazarbaev, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to FAO; Barbara Nappini, President of Slow Food Italy; and Fabio Attorre, Director of the Botanical Garden of Rome.

> “Investments in digital inclusion and innovative financing for small and medium-sized enterprises in the mountainous areas are needed to improve livelihoods. It is essential to empower young people to drive change through technology, education and entrepreneurship, while also valuing traditional techniques and knowledge.”
>
> **QU Dongyu**
> FAO Director-General

International Mountain Day celebrations at the FAO headquarters

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

Tasting mountain delicacies during the IMD celebrations
©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

A mountain village, created by Slow Food Italy producers in the FAO Atrium, transported visitors to various regions of Italy, showcasing delicacies such as Monte Veronese DOP cheese from Veneto, *pecorino* cheeses from Lazio, *soppressata* sausage from Campania and coffee roasted in Sicily and Veneto. The event showed how mountain culinary traditions contribute to resilient local food systems and saw the launch of Montagna Madre 2025, a spin-off of Slow Food's historic Terra Madre Salone del Gusto, which was held in Rome from 29 to 30 March 2025.

Vivia Ferragamo presents her ethical fashion collaboration with Wakami ©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

Zhimin Wu, Director of the FAO Forestry Division speaks with Ambassador Olga María Pérez Tuna, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Guatemala to FAO and RosaLaura Romeo of the MPS

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

In close alignment with the theme of IMD 2024, the MPS publication *Promoting innovation and tradition - Solutions for climate change adaptation in mountains* was launched at the Rome event. Centred around 26 case studies drawn from the experiences of MP Members, the book underscores the challenges posed by climate change to mountain ecosystems and communities, while showcasing successful adaptation strategies from around the world. The case studies include sustainable crop, livestock and water management practices, use of protected areas, adaptation strategies for forests and cities, the promotion of social business entrepreneurship and sustainable investments in mountain value chains.

In celebration of IMD 2024, the MPS launched the Mountain Future Award to recognize transformative projects that address challenges such as climate change, poverty and biodiversity loss in mountain regions. More than 840 submissions were received from some 75 countries.

Three winners were selected in the categories of Innovation, Adaptation and Youth. A Rwandan initiative won the Innovation category, while Acres of Ice from India claimed the Adaptation prize and the Mountain Youth Hub won the Youth category. They each received USD 5 000 seed funding, international recognition and incubation support, sponsored by MP Members, the Arjun Gupta Foundation, Forte di Bard and the Sapienza University of Rome. The three winners for the Innovation, Adaptation and Youth categories are profiled in this report.

At least 23 different countries marked IMD with 60 events that ranged from film screenings and conferences to community walks and youth engagement initiatives, all highlighting the critical role that mountains play in the Earth's ecosystems and the urgent need for their protection. In almost every corner of the globe, events organized by governments, organizations and MP Members celebrated mountain culture, innovation and sustainability. For a full list, see the [IMD website](https://www.fao.org/international-mountain-day).

11 December
INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY
OPENING
MOUNTA FUTURE RD 20
REMO
Mountain Future Award 2024 Mountain Youth Hub
Mountain Future Award 2024 Eric Mutera
Mountain Future Award 2024 Acres of Ice

Winners of the Mountain Future Award pictured with MPS staff in Rome

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

Scaling innovation for mountain communities

Technicians carry out essential maintenance on artificial glacier project

©Acres Of Ice

Innovation is a critical component of any strategy to address the complex issues facing mountains and their communities. It includes technological advancements, such as digital solutions for monitoring and conservation, as well as creative problem-solving such as climate-smart agriculture and novel approaches to livelihoods, resource management and financing.

Grounding technological, institutional, social, policy and financial innovation in local realities and integrating the dynamism and fresh perspectives of youth, we can address mountain communities' marginalization and vulnerability. For example, combining local knowledge and field surveys with geographic information system data, satellite imagery and remote sensing strengthens disaster management and habitat plans. Investments in digital inclusion and innovative financing for small and medium mountain enterprises can help to improve livelihoods.

International Mountain Day 2024 celebration
MOUNTAIN FUTURE AWARD 2024
DATE 11.12.202
PAY TO THE ORDER OF
Eric Muhire
$ 5,000.00
Five Thousand
USD
FOR
Category: Innovation
SIGNATURE
Arjun Gupta
Family Foundation

Eric Muhire from Rwanda receives the Mountain Future Award 2024 for the Innovation category

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

A winning mix of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and AI

Eric Muhire from Rwanda was named as winner of the Mountain Future Award 2024 in the Innovation category for his project on Revitalizing Indigenous Peoples' knowledge for Climate Adaptation. This initiative combines Indigenous agricultural expertise with modern artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to create a digital platform for climate-resilient farming solutions. The innovation award was sponsored by MP Member the Arjun Gupta Foundation.

Connecting with our agrifood systems

Vegetables grown on the roof of the FAO headquarters in Rome is being served on a monthly basis in the FAO rooftop restaurant. The MPS, in collaboration with the Sapienza University Botanical Garden of Rome and supported by the Italian Development Cooperation, has successfully cultivated crops using an innovative hydroponics system, which allows tap water to be used, eliminating the need for demineralized water and thus reducing resource waste. Only organic fertilizers are used on the vegetables, thereby lowering the plot's ecological footprint. The system is designed for outdoor use, eliminating the need for artificial light used in conventional hydroponics, thus maintaining exceptionally low energy consumption.

The rooftop plot aims to illustrate how innovative technologies can be used to grow crops in areas with limited natural resources, such as mountains. In return for the hydroponic vegetables, the FAO buffet restaurant will sponsor the MP training programme GROW - Agrobiodiversity in a changing climate, which each year teaches 30 young professionals about the importance of biodiversity in agriculture under climate change.

Inauguration of the MPS hydroponic garden on FAO rooftop, Rome

©FAO/Alessia Pierdomenico

Strategies for water management in Nepal's mountain regions

Dhankuta Municipality, Nepal is tackling water scarcity through its Nibuwa-Tankhuwa Watershed Management Plan. In partnership with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), MetaMeta, Future Water and local stakeholders, water recharge ponds have been built, which in turn have revived springs. The plan also promotes alternative livelihoods by establishing homestays, developing hiking trails for tourism and providing targeted support for Indigenous Aathpahariya communities and women's groups. Since its inception, the plan has improved water availability, enhanced conservation, and empowered marginalized groups in the area. By addressing climate and socioeconomic challenges, it sets a replicable model for more resilient mountain communities.

Workers constructing water recharge pond in Dhankuta Municipality, Nepal

©Dhankuta Municpality, Nepal Photos

Expert database unites mountain experts for collaborative solutions

The Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) launched the Expert Database, a dynamic platform connecting researchers, policymakers and practitioners working on mountain sustainability. This innovative initiative enhances collaboration by facilitating access to expertise across disciplines, regions and sectors. The database makes it easier to find specialists, exchange knowledge and tackle pressing challenges in mountain regions. A valuable tool for shaping policies and projects, it fills knowledge gaps and drives innovative solutions, helping to forge a stronger, more connected community dedicated to sustainable mountain development.

Seven-coloured lake in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, Russian Federation

©Михаил Зорин

Community-driven climate action in Nepal

In Nepal, MP Member the Institute of Himalayan Risk Reduction launched VICTORY (Visualizing the Power of Citizen Science Through Observation and Repository for Anticipatory Action), an innovative solution combining low-cost hardware and software to harness community involvement in climate science. The initiative utilized repurposed soda bottles to measure daily rainfall in Bhimeshwor and Barbardiya municipalities. With support from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, it trained 106 citizen scientists, engaged 407 local officials and introduced early warning systems and climate action to 915 schoolchildren. More than 15 000 hydrometeorological data points were collected, allowing communities and local governments to improve landslide risk criteria, assess flood risks and issue early warnings.

VICTORY initiative; local citizen scientist measuring rainfall in Nepal

©Institute of Himalayan Risk Reduction (IHRR)

Adaptation for greater resilience in mountains

Wheat farming terraces on mountains in Laghman Province, Afghanistan

©FAO/Sahil

For generations, mountain communities have shown themselves to be highly adept at devising strategies that will enable them to survive and thrive in harsh environmental conditions. However, the escalating impacts of climate change present unprecedented challenges, and robust adaptation solutions will be essential to preserving people's traditional ways of life, livelihoods and environment.

Adaptation strategies tailored to mountain ecosystems and communities include solutions such as ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction and the integration of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems. Terracing, agroforestry, crop diversification, sustainable soil and water management and agroecology are just some of the approaches that can help to enhance resilience, diversify livelihoods and increase income, while advancing ecosystem conservation to ensure that the impacts are long-lasting.

Impactful adaptation solutions require long-term investment, cross-sectoral planning, inclusive governance frameworks and broad multi-actor engagement, including gender mainstreaming.

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MOUNTAIN SOL
FOR A SUSTAINAB
Mountain Future Award
2024
Acres of Ice

Suryanarayanan Balasubramanian from Acres of Ice of India receives the Mountain Future Award 2024 for the Adaptation category

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

Ice reservoirs for sustainable water management

Acres of Ice of India won the Mountain Future Award 2024 in the Adaptation category for a project on automated ice reservoirs for sustainable water management. The award was sponsored by MP Member Forte di Bard. The initiative, developed in Ladakh's trans-Himalayan region, has led to water availability increasing by 30 percent and water storage capacity growing fourfold compared with traditional methods. An additional benefit of this adaptation technique, which is designed to compensate for glacial losses in mountains, has been a reduced need for manual maintenance, as a result of remote monitoring.

Indigenous knowledge boosts climate adaptation

Adaptation at Altitude seeks to increase the adaptative capacity of mountain communities and ecosystems to climate change by improving knowledge of appropriate strategies. Drawing on 22 examples from the Adaptation at Altitude Solutions Portal, this collaborative programme has given an overview of how Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is used in climate adaptation in mountain regions, under five wide-ranging themes: ecological expertise and biodiversity conservation; traditional farming techniques; community cohesion and networks; cultural and spiritual resilience; and collaboration and knowledge sharing. Challenges include scaling solutions, mainstreaming into policies and securing sustainable financing. Public-private partnerships, such as Ecuador's Tungurahua fund, demonstrate potential, mobilizing USD 5.5 million for conservation and inspiring similar initiatives in Colombia and Peru.

Sunrise over snowy peaks of Kyrgyzstan
©Айдана Абакова

Small dam restores mountain habitats in Morocco

Franco-Moroccan NGO Migrations & Développement works closely with local partners, governments and citizens' associations to implement inclusive development and revitalization, building on ancestral knowledge combined with modern agroecology practices. A small dam project is visibly transforming the landscape in Hloukte, a Moroccan mountain village of 513 inhabitants, where for the first time farmland is now receiving regular irrigation. Local people have planted 300 000 fruit trees, which have helped to stabilize the soil, prevent runoff and restore animal and insect habitats.

Shepherd from the Siroua region, Morocco

©Abdellah Azizi

Enhancing orchard productivity through grafting

MP Member Mountain Hazelnuts, a social enterprise in Bhutan, works with more than 8 000 smallholder farmers to cultivate premium hazelnuts through agroforestry practices. Focusing on biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and poverty alleviation, the company launched a large-scale grafting programme in 2024 covering 303 hectares (ha), introducing climate-resilient hazelnut varieties. With over 450 000 grafts completed by 150 trained grafters, this initiative enhances orchard productivity and supports sustainable livelihoods. Aligned with the framework for the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023–2027, it represents one of the largest climate adaptation efforts in the region.

Farmer with his hazelnut harvest, Bhutan.
©Mountain Hazelnuts

Adaptation for Alpine tourism – rethinking low-altitude ski resorts

In response to climate change, the SciAlp project, completed in December 2024 by the University of Turin's Department of Management, explored adaptation strategies for low-altitude ski resorts in the Italian Alps. Working with the villages of Balme and Valprato Soana in the northwestern Italian Alps, the study assessed future climate scenarios, the viability of artificial snow and the economic and environmental trade-offs of maintaining ski operations. Recognizing the growing challenges, the project proposed alternative tourism models to ensure sustainable local development, offering a blueprint for mountain communities facing similar climate-induced transformations.

Mountain guide crossing a glacier in the Alps with group
©Janosch Hugi

Recognition for contributions to mountain conservation in Africa

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) Network was awarded the 2024 Albert Mountain Award for its exceptional contributions to mountain conservation and sustainable development across Africa. As the region's leading mountain hub, ARCOS promotes biodiversity management, conducts climate assessments and empowers grassroots organizations in environmental action. A key player in landscape restoration, it has restored more than 40 000 ha and 56 000 household farmers are actively engaged in efforts to promote biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and community-led environmental action.

As part of its commitment to strengthening regional collaboration and promoting innovation, ARCOS organized the 6th Africa Regional Mountains Forum (ARMF2024) held from 10 to 11 December in Kigali, Rwanda, under the theme "Mountains, Water, and Climate: Innovation for a Sustainable Future", to address climate challenges in African mountain regions. Participants exchanged knowledge, showcased adaptation solutions and explored innovative approaches for sustainable mountain development.

Mountain landscapes on the border between Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania

©FAO/Giuseppe Bizzarri

A lesson in traditional embroidery techniques in Kyrgyzstan

©FAO/Mirbek Kadraliev

Young voices shape the future of mountains

The potential of young people as agents of change for sustainable mountain habitats and communities is a key strategic pillar for the work of the MPS.

The future of the mountain agenda relies on meaningful youth engagement and on investing in this critical sector of society, whose energy and commitment can drive climate action and the societal change needed to ensure that its impacts are enduring. Youth-led programmes and enterprises, coupled with financing and intergenerational collaboration, can spur solutions for mountains, while equal access to education, health, employment and credit is key to engaging youth and halting outmigration.

MOUNTAIN FUTURE AWARD 2024
DATE 11.12.2024
PAY TO THE ORDER OF Mountain Youth Hub
$ 5,000.00
Five Thousand USD
FOR Category: Youth
SIGNATURE
Polo Museale Sapienza
Sapienza University of Rome

Rocío Melina Garcia from the Mountain Youth Hub receives the Mountain Future Award 2024 for the Youth category

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

Connecting and empowering youth for a sustainable mountain future

The Mountain Youth Hub (MYH) won the Mountain Future Award 2024 in the Youth category for its innovative platform that connects and empowers young mountain people around the world. Launched by a group of youth delegates attending IPROMO 2023 Summer School, with the aim of helping to implement the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023–2027, the MYH has grown from 30 members to a network of over 250, providing a hub for collaboration, knowledge exchange, advocacy and innovation. The award was sponsored by La Sapienza University of Rome.

Developing resilient agrifood systems in mountain regions

Young innovators from highland regions in Ghana, Nepal and Peru showcased their approaches to improving mountain agrifood systems during the World Food Forum (WFF), held from 14 to 18 October 2024 at FAO headquarters in Rome. The virtual side event, organized by the Mountain Youth Hub, highlighted youth-led innovation to develop resilient agrifood systems in mountain regions, ensuring food security, biodiversity conservation and cultural preservation for future generations. Participants in the online session heard how mountain youth in Cusco, Peru are leading efforts to safeguard seed varieties and enhance food security through fairs and educational initiatives. Radip Tandukar, Programme Director of digital agriculture platform GeoKrishi described how digital technology is helping to connect farmers, suppliers, technicians and local governments in Nepal, with benefits along the supply chain, from cultivation to marketing.

Mountain Youth Hub members

©Ritikaa Gupta

Listening to Indigenous Youth

The voices of Indigenous young people were heard at a side event during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on 23 April 2024. Jointly organized by FAO, the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC), the Association of World Reindeer Herders, Norway and the MP, the session was titled “Calls to Action for Safeguarding Seven Generations in Times of Food, Social, and Ecological Crises: Reporting on the Outcomes of the 2023 UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum (UNGIYF)”. The UNGIYF is the only high-level biennial forum in the United Nations to be held for and by Indigenous Youth and is hosted by FAO. Launched in 2021, it recognizes Indigenous Youth as key actors in the future of climate, biodiversity and food system transformation.

Indigenous youth at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

©Prerana Lama

No climate action without climate justice

Youth in mountains and climate justice were two important themes to emerge from a series of events held during the World Social Forum 2024 Nepal, from 16 to 18 February 2024. In collaboration with MP Member the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC), the MPS participated in the Global Climate Justice Assembly. Called "Mountains in peril together for the people and planet", the event explored how to enhance the resilience of mountain livelihoods in the face of climate change. During a session on the Youth Climate Justice Assembly, Sara Manuelli, Advocacy Officer for the MPS, stated: "There can be no climate action without climate justice". She emphasized the need to develop decent employment, education and access to finance for youth in mountains.

Celebrations at the World Social Forum in Nepal

©FAO/Rosalaura Romeo

Education for empowerment

Education on climate change and sustainability is crucial for mountain girls and women, both for their empowerment and to drive lasting solutions in their communities. This message was emphasized at a side event during the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Advocating for mountain women and girls' education through student-engaged learning". Organized by the Utah International Mountain Forum at Utah Valley University (UVU) on 14 March 2024, the event highlighted UVU's student-engaged learning (SEL) model, which enables both traditional and non-traditional students, including working adults, to contribute to the mountain agenda.

On United Nations Day, 24 October 2024, former Assistant Secretary of State for the US Bureau of International Organization Affairs Ambassador Michele J. Sison visited UVU, recognizing students' advocacy for mountain women. These students continue to push for mountain women's inclusion in global policy.

Utah Valley University students with Michele Sison, former Assistant Secretary of State for the US Bureau of International Organization Affairs

©Utah Valley University

Farming students take to the fields

With a focus on sustainable development in rural and mountainous areas, the Georgian Technical University, through its Faculty of Sustainable Mountain Development, organized a field trip to the foothills of Guria-Adjara, where students gained first-hand experience of innovative climate-smart technologies. The training included hands-on observation and evaluation of organic products grown by the students, along with a study of the dynamic processes involved in organic production management. This immersive learning experience provided students with the practical knowledge and skills needed to help them to become leaders in sustainable mountain development.

Students learn about organic agrifood systems in the foothills of Guria-Adjara, Georgia

©Georgian Technical University Faculty of Sustainable Mountain Development

Youth entrepreneurship in the Himalayas

In October 2024, the inaugural Himalayan Youth Entrepreneurship Dialogue, co-hosted by the Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research and Education and Mount Valley Development Association, brought together over 40 dynamic young minds in Uttarakhand, India. The two-day dialogue featured knowledge sharing, mentorship and networking across sectors such as agribusiness, arts and technology. Through interactive discussions, participants identified key challenges facing mountain entrepreneurs, including limited access to finance and markets. The event was a powerful reminder of the energy and creativity that youth can bring to sustainable development in the Himalayas, offering essential insights for the design of future support programmes aimed at empowering the next generation of change-makers.

Participants in the Himalayan Youth Entrepreneurship Dialogue, India

©Chinmaya Shah/ INHERE

Future farming and resilient communities

Recognizing youth as the stewards of the future, the Social Work Institute focused on empowering youth from the Network of Youths for Agroecology, together with farmers and local partners at an agroecology orientation programme in the Chandannath Municipality of Jumla, India. The event focused on sustainable practices such as mixed cropping and integrated pest management, complemented by hands-on training in organic fertilizer production and traditional storage techniques. This programme equipped participants with the skills and confidence to adopt sustainable farming practices, leading to healthier farms, more resilient communities and the conservation of natural resources in the mountainous region of Jumla.

Participants in the agroecology orientation programme in Jumla, India

©Social Work Institute, Nepal

Vivia Ferragamo exploring the variety of fabric samples in Guatemalan workshop

©CharlieQuezada-CoheteStudio

Highland treasures

Mountain products are naturally unique, grown in high-altitude environments with traditional, often organic practices. Their distinct flavours and qualities reflect the resilience of mountain communities.

Through MP projects, we strengthen their economic viability by enhancing value chains, improving market access and promoting sustainable production. Investing in mountain treasures means investing in both people and ecosystems.

Weaving change in mountains

A vibrant partnership between women artisans in Guatemala and renowned fashion designer Vivia Ferragamo is boosting incomes for rural women while breathing new life into their rich mountain traditions. The Fashion for Fragile Ecosystems initiative has helped to forge the link by connecting the Italian designer to women from Guatemalan social enterprise Wakami. In 2024, Ferragamo and the Wakami women worked hand-in-hand to co-design a contemporary collection inspired by local traditions, knowledge and culture.

Launched by the MP and funded by the Italian Development Cooperation, Fashion for Fragile Ecosystems is a project that bridges the gap between remote mountain and island communities and the global fashion industry. It brings together artisans from mountain and island communities with international fashion brands, creating lasting change through an equal exchange of skills, technical training and financial support. The collection created by Vivia Ferragamo and the Wakami artisans was unveiled at a fashion event in Guatemala City and the Wakami artisans are now being supported to access new markets.

Weaving in the Guatemalan traditional style

©CharlieQuezada-CoheteStudio

Certification scheme strengthens mountain economies

The highly successful Mountain Partnership Products (MPP) initiative, funded by the Italian Development Cooperation, went from strength to strength in 2024, offering technical and financial support to growing numbers of smallholder mountain producers who have been able to develop the value chains of mountain products such as organic food, textiles and tourism services. As part of its mission to support small-scale mountain farmers in establishing quality assurance systems, the MPP initiative has created the first international network of mountain participatory guarantee systems (PGS) to support ethical, fair and organic mountain farming systems.

The MPP initiative's achievements in 2024 included the following:

- 45 products carried the MPP narrative label
- 18 000 farmers endorsed the MPP scheme (60 percent of them women)
- 6 new producer organizations started establishing a PGS (making a total of 16)

Beekeepers harvesting honey from their hives

©Coord Rural

Mixed farming produces higher yields and incomes

Through the MPP Initiative, Indian farmer producer organization Vaagdhara is helping mountain communities to bolster their resilience to climate stress and improve incomes. Lalita Kampa has introduced mixed farming to her small plot in the mountainous village of Anandpuri. By cultivating *Safed Saathi Makai* white maize together with *Urad* bean, she ensures that at least one crop can be harvested, even in seasons with adverse weather. With the MPP label, the price of the crops has increased. Last year, this farmer's yields of both crops were plentiful, which allowed her to become financially stable with a dependable income stream for herself and her family.

Lalita Kampa sorting through her harvest of *Safed Saathi Makai* white maize, India

©Panchabhai Patel

Supporting mountain entrepreneurs to build sustainable futures

A grants programme to support innovative entrepreneurship in agricultural and textile value chains is helping thousands of small-scale producers in ten countries to establish sustainable livelihoods. The Business Incubator and Accelerator (BIA) for Mountains and Islands was set up by the MP together with the United Nations Development Programme's Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme and funded by the Italian Development Cooperation. The initiative aims to increase the resilience of mountain and island communities.

The programme, which also offers technical assistance and capacity development, is being implemented in the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines and Uganda.

Lunch for cattle on the shore of a mountain lake, Kyrgyzstan

©Автаева Татьяна

Its achievements in 2024 included:

- 107 producer organizations incubated (over 350 customized coaching sessions delivered)
- 53 grants awarded to producer organizations (up to USD 50 000 per grant)
- 53 acceleration programmes awarded
- Over 37 000 farmers engaged
- 9 PGS initiatives strengthened

MP Member the University of Milan – Food and Environment Department carried out research on the benefits of small-scale farming in eight of ten countries involved in the BIA programme. The study included 23 producer organizations from the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines and Uganda. The findings highlighted significant environmental advantages of small-scale mountain agriculture compared with intensive agricultural practices in the areas, including increased carbon stock and reduced erosion, leaching and greenhouse gas emissions. Social benefits emerged from strong community governance and inclusivity, while economic analysis revealed notable cost savings, particularly linked to reduced erosion.

Peruvian coffee producers Eloy and Clara on their farm at Calca, Cuzco region

©Aaron Ebner

Mongolian herders who have received training from the Sustainable Fibre Alliance

©SFA Mongolia

Mountain heritage and sustainable cashmere in Mongolia

Mongolia's rich cashmere heritage is integral to its nomadic culture, but growing demand has led to unsustainable practices. The Sustainable Fibre Alliance, in partnership with the MPS, is working to reverse this trend. Through the BIA programme, herder organizations in Mongolia have received grants, technical support and training in sustainable practices, such as improved animal welfare and cashmere sorting. This collaboration aims to preserve traditional herding, while aligning with modern sustainability standards, benefiting both communities and the environment.

Coffee value chains for climate-resilient mountain livelihoods

The MPS participated in the Terra Madre event, “How Coffee Value Chains Foster Climate-Resilient Livelihoods”, organized by Slow Food. Held on 27 September in Turin, Italy, the session examined the critical role of agroforestry coffee production and practices for building a sustainable value chain, with a focus on Malawi and Uganda. The event highlighted experiences from the Business Incubator and Accelerator in Slow Food communities, emphasizing the role of sustainable coffee value chains in promoting climate resilience and supporting livelihoods in mountain regions. It also marked the launch of joint FAO-Slow Food Coffee Coalition publication: *How coffee value chains foster climate-resilient livelihoods: The FAO-Slow Food Coffee Coalition experience*.

View from the Coffee Route, Quindío, Colombia

©Santiago Sierra Durán

Empowering mountain communities, one stitch at a time

A panel to explore the scope for harnessing sustainable fashion initiatives to produce livelihood benefits for marginalized communities took place on 5 June 2024 during the Phygital Sustainability Expo® in Rome. The event highlighted the alliance between the Italian Development Cooperation, the MPS and FAO to leverage fashion as a way of helping communities to revive traditional designs and achieve economic benefit. Panelists included Stefano Gatti, Director General of the Italian Development Cooperation, Stella Jean, fashion designer and MP Goodwill Ambassador, Alberto Piatti, former Sustainable Development Advisor for Eni SpA, Ada Rasulova, coordinator of the Kyrgyz Topchu artisan group and Giorgio Grussu of the MPS.

Stella Jean spoke about her involvement in MPS project Fashion for Fragile Ecosystems. In 2020, Jean produced a fashion collection with the women of the Topchu artisan group in mountainous Kyrgyzstan, which was launched at Milan Fashion Week 2021. She went on to co-create a collection with the women alpaca herders and artisans of Illiary Threads4Dreams in the Peruvian Andes. Both initiatives have brought economic empowerment for the women artisans and their families.

GIORGIO GRUSSU
COORDINATORE PROGETTI, FAO-MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP
SUSTAINABILITY PHYGITAL EXPO

Speakers at Phygital Sustainability Expo® in Rome

©Phygital Sustainability Expo®

Reforestation for the Kurdistan Region

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, mountains such as Gara, Korek, Safin, Halgurd, Bamo and Piramagroon are home to ancient oak forests, rare wildlife and a diverse array of bird species. The Kurdistan Regional Government has launched several major reforestation projects aimed at combating deforestation and reviving thousands of hectares of destroyed forests, to help mountain communities develop their environment through agroforestry and sustainable land management. The ultimate objective is to create sustainable ecosystems that can support both human and wildlife populations.

Reforestation initiative in mountains of the Kurdistan Region, Iraq

©Saber Di

Sustainable development initiatives in Romania's mountain regions

In Romania, the National Agency for the Mountain Area has implemented 113 projects aimed at promoting sustainable development in the country's mountainous regions. These initiatives focus on the collection and processing of forest fruits, mushrooms and medicinal and aromatic plants, alongside milk collection and processing centres, and the establishment of mountain sheepfolds. With a total public investment of EUR 8.8 million (USD 9 million), the projects are designed to support local communities, enhance agricultural practices and promote the sustainable use of natural resources in mountain areas, fostering both economic growth and environmental preservation.

Participants in sustainable mountain initiative in Romania

©Dănuţ Ungureanu Photos

Climate-smart wildlife conservation

The United Nations Environment Programme's Vanishing Treasures programme, funded by the Government of Luxembourg, works to protect and strengthen the resilience of mountain species, ecosystems and communities. Following a decision to expand the project to the Andean region – Colombia and Ecuador – national consultation processes were organized in 2024 with government representatives from both countries, to exchange ideas about the selection of target species and sites, as well as relevant ongoing initiatives. The representatives shared their perspectives, needs and capacities regarding wildlife conservation, and solutions for human-wildlife conflict and climate adaptation in their territories.

Vanishing Treasures programme works to conserve endangered species, such as the snow leopard

©Vladislav

Communications and knowledge management

Hiker takes photograph of mountain landscape, Algeria

©Gribi Mohammed

Sharing knowledge and information plays a pivotal role in the MP's mission to support the livelihoods of mountain communities and protect their environments. On a regular basis, the MPS creates, collects and shares mountain-related information to raise awareness of the issues facing these vulnerable regions and promote greater visibility for mountain areas in policy and climate negotiation settings.

MP activities include producing key publications and policy briefs on sustainable mountain development, sharing mountain news and events via the MP website and through the monthly Peak to Peak newsletter.

Offering support in communications and knowledge management to MP Members is another important area of activity. To this end, the MP provides guidance and material, encouraging Members to make use of the MP channels and key messages to promote their work with a collective voice and focus global attention on mountain issues.

Advancing science-policy dialogue

The Science and Knowledge Advisory Committee (SKAC) of the MP continued its primary objective of strengthening the MP's work in 2024 and providing support to its advocacy and communication efforts. Launched in 2022 to support the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, the committee's impact was such that members opted to extend its mandate. SKAC's work involves contributing to science-policy dialogue in support of sustainable mountain development, which includes identifying research gaps and priorities. Since its establishment, the committee has actively advanced knowledge of sustainable mountain development through the preparation of nine policy briefs on diverse topics. It currently has more than 120 members representing 70 institutions.

Advancing the science-policy nexus

©Department of Environmental Biology – University of Rome "La Sapienza"

How climate change affects human mobility in mountain areas

A new report explores how climate change impacts human mobility in mountainous regions, many of which are increasingly vulnerable to both sudden hazards, such as landslides and floods, and slow-onset changes, such as temperature rise and shifts in precipitation. Jointly published by the International Organization for Migration, the MP and FAO, *Human mobility in mountain areas in a changing climate* draws on evidence from Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to examine how mountain communities respond to climate-induced pressures and the implications for women left to manage households during male outmigration. The policy brief highlights the need for more targeted research, policy interventions and support systems to mitigate the challenges faced by these vulnerable populations.

Woman working in forest in Kyrgyzstan
©FAO/Mirbek Kadralie

A milestone for mountain advocacy in Argentina

For the first time, Argentina's *State of the Environment Report* includes a dedicated chapter on mountains, emphasizing the unique environmental challenges faced by these ecosystems. Published by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the report provides a comprehensive assessment of the country's environmental status as of 2023. It covers key topics such as protected areas, soil health, forests and emissions control. By incorporating mountain ecosystems into this national assessment, the report establishes an important baseline for future policy decisions and sustainable development planning.

Fitz Roy Mountain in Argentina
©Anna Christina Böhm

Shaping new responses to socioecological changes in mountains

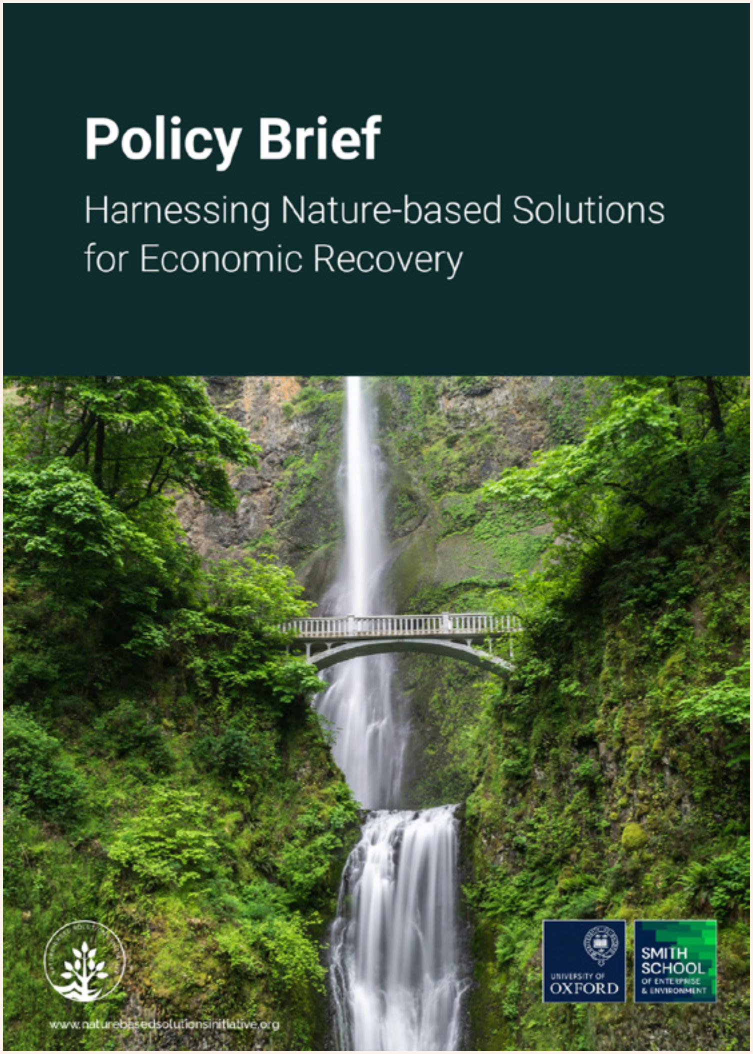
The Mountain Research Initiative (MRI)'s Mountain Social-Ecological Futures Working Group hosted a kick-off workshop and participated in the 2024 World Biodiversity Forum in Davos, Switzerland, held from 16 to 21 June. Established in 2023, the Working Group aims to synthesize best practices and innovative ideas to envision and shape responses to the unprecedented, climate-driven and other changes affecting mountain regions. It also seeks to build a much-needed community of practice to drive new research agendas and proactively and sustainably manage emerging challenges. At the workshop, a roadmap for achieving these objectives was defined by taking stock of the pertinent issues and drafting a position paper for publication in 2025.

The MRI's Mountain Social-Ecological Futures Working Group, Switzerland

©Mountain Research Initiative

Economic recovery through nature-based solutions

Peru's Instituto de Montaña, in collaboration with researchers from the Nature-Based Solutions Initiative at the University of Oxford, published *Harnessing nature-based solutions for economic recovery: A systematic review.* The study provides robust evidence of the economic benefits of nature-based solutions (NbS), identifying key themes such as positive economic impacts, broader societal benefits, trade-offs and win-wins, as well as knowledge gaps. To support policymakers, a policy brief was also released, summarizing the findings and offering insights into integrating NbS in economic recovery strategies.



Policy Brief

Harnessing Nature-based Solutions for Economic Recovery

www.naturebasedsolutionsinitiative.org

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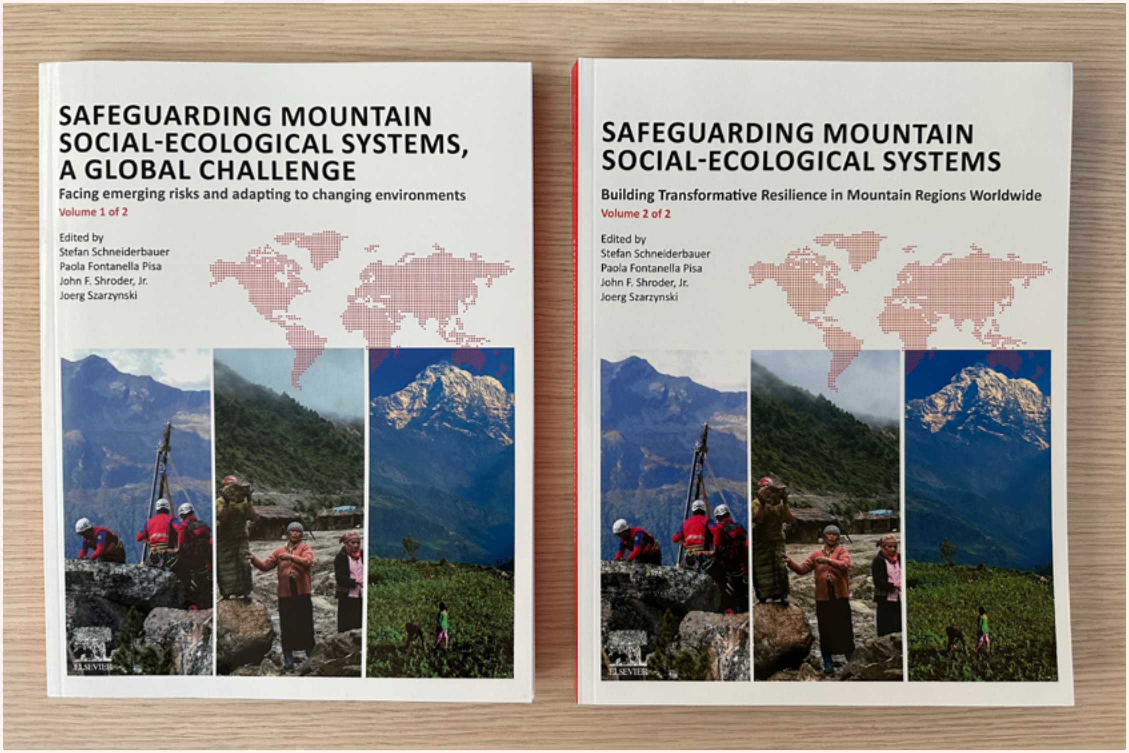
SMITH SCHOOL OF ENTERPRISE & ENVIRONMENT

Global and local solutions to challenges faced by mountain regions

The Global Mountain Safeguard Research (GLOMOS) programme, a joint initiative of the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security and Eurac Research, published *Safeguarding mountain social-ecological systems, a global challenge*. The two-volume publication explores the challenges facing mountain regions and highlights global and local solutions. Volume 1 examines global efforts and networks addressing mountain sustainability, while Volume 2 presents region-specific research on diverse mountain social-ecological systems. This publication contributes to advancing mountain research and promoting resilience in mountain communities worldwide, as it includes solutions to challenges faced locally and globally.



SAFEGUARDING MOUNTAIN SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS, A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Facing emerging risks and adapting to changing environments

Volume 1 of 2

Edited by
Stefan Schneiderbauer
Paola Fontanella Pisa
John F. Shroder, Jr.
Joerg Szarzynski

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SAFEGUARDING MOUNTAIN SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Building Transformative Resilience in Mountain Regions Worldwide

Volume 2 of 2

Edited by
Stefan Schneiderbauer
Paola Fontanella Pisa
John F. Shroder, Jr.
Joerg Szarzynski

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Strategizing sustainable development for mountain communities

Building on previous studies for the development of Troodos mountain communities in Cyprus, Professor Dimitris Goussios, Coordinator of the Scientific Council of the MountMed Institute, authored *The spatial dimension of Mediterranean mountain development – National strategy for the development of the Troodos mountain communities (Cyprus)* with contributions from institute partners Dimitra Gaki, Prodromos Mardakis and Ioannis Faraslis. The book provides essential guidance on territorial diagnostics, evaluation frameworks and the development of operational plans that support sustainable mountain development, contributing to ongoing efforts to enhance the resilience and prosperity of Mediterranean mountain regions.

Hilly landscape in Cyprus
©Patricia Quillacq

Mountain Partnership by numbers:

website and social media analytics

MP website

127 775 total views in 2024
69 835 total users in 2024

IMD website

19 932 total views in 2024
13 475 total users in 2024

LinkedIn

2 512 followers in Jan 2024
4 213 followers in Jan 2025
67% increase

4 986 total reactions in 2024

Instagram

2 674 followers in Jan 2024
3 203 followers in Jan 2025
19% increase

Facebook

9 176 followers in Jan 2024
9 500 followers in Jan 2025
3% increase

X (formerly Twitter)

3 222 followers in Jan 2024
3 425 followers in Jan 2025
6% increase

Along the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border

©Christopher Wilton-Steer

Mountain Partnership outreach products

Publications

Mountain Partnership Segretariat 2023 Annual Report

Human mobility in mountain areas in a changing climate

Promoting innovation and tradition – Solutions for climate change adaptation in mountains

Enhancing mountain livelihoods and resilience

Training for change

The Mountain Partnership

Championing the global mountain agenda

The Mountain Facility

Why mountains matter

Videos

When ethical fashion meets mountain women’s cultural heritage in Guatemala

IMD 2024 Highlights

Hydroponic garden

Bee hotels installed by Mountain Partnership of the United Nations at FAO HQ

Stories

Weaving new futures (FAO Future Story)

Press releases

FAO marks International Mountain Day 2024 with a focus on climate adaptation solutions

FAO project paves the way for the Chestnut Route in Albania

Collaboration between mountain communities and Italian fashion designers wins Japan World Expo 2025 award

2024
Innovative financing, digital technology and collaboration hubs can boost livelihoods in mountain regions.
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Mountain Partnership
2024
Indigenous Peoples, women and local communities are key to climate solutions in mountain regions.
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Mountain Partnership

International Mountain Day 2024 social media card

@FAO

Training for change

Workshop on the use of organic fertilizer, Peru

©Aaron Ebner

To address a global gap in training courses for sustainable mountain development, the MPS has devised a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing knowledge and expertise. Each year, it teams up with partners to deliver university courses and organize summer courses, workshops and training sessions.

Training and capacity-building initiatives are essential to building resilient mountain communities in the face of climate change. Through targeted educational programmes, local populations gain the knowledge and practical tools needed to adapt to shifting environmental conditions. For example, training in sustainable resource management, such as vulnerability assessments or climate change adaptation techniques, empowers communities to safeguard their livelihoods and preserve their ecosystems. Workshops focused on innovative solutions – such as smokeless cookstoves or sustainable tourism practices – enhance local capacities while increasing economic opportunities and improving health. These programmes not only equip individuals with necessary skills but also promote community-level collaboration, ensuring that the impacts of climate change can be addressed collectively and effectively in mountain regions.

A deep dive into agrifood systems and mountain products

The 2024 IPROMO Summer School brought together 28 young people from 20 countries for two weeks of immersive learning dedicated to sustainable mountain development. This year's course included on-site learning in Ormea and Val d'Aosta in the Italian Alps, with a focus on promoting agrifood systems and mountain products. Under the guidance of experts from FAO and other organizations from Finland, Italy, Nepal, Peru and Switzerland, the international participants learned about sustainable agrifood systems and value chains in mountains, as well as climate change, water, communication and techniques for preserving mountain soils.

IPROMO participants in northern Italy
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A hands-on approach to addressing biodiversity challenges in mountains

The annual GROW - Agrobiodiversity in a Changing Climate course focused on how biodiversity can enhance resilience and adaptation to climate change in mountain farming systems. Held over a two-week period in November, the programme was attended by 29 participants from 18 countries. The course had a strong practical focus, with sessions on sustainable natural resource management and accountability tools in supply chains, as well as on the conservation and sustainable use of edible plants. The curriculum also offered opportunities for hands-on experience to adapt agricultural methods to address the biodiversity challenges posed by climate change.

The *Bereke Sandyk* initiative, Kyrgyzstan

©Aida Musaeva

Aida Musaeva, winner of the 2024 GROW contest, leads the *Bereke Sandyk* initiative in Karavan, Batken, Kyrgyzstan. This community savings group helps 19 mountain farmers to pool resources, reducing reliance on external loans. Members contribute weekly to support agricultural investments such as purchasing seedlings and developing land, strengthening local food security. By bolstering financial independence and resilience, *Bereke Sandyk* showcases how collective savings can drive sustainable development in mountain communities.

Vulnerability assessments for improved rural livelihoods

In 2024, the “Sustainable management of natural resources in mountain areas” project expanded its reach, and is now operating in five countries worldwide: Afghanistan, Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro and Pakistan. Funded by the Italian Development Cooperation, the project aims to improve the livelihoods of rural communities through sustainable management of natural resources, with a focus on mountain areas.

A key activity in 2024 was a four-day training course on mountain vulnerability assessment, which was conducted in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for 20 participants from various ministries and academia. Assessing vulnerability in a country where mountains cover more than 90 percent of the territory is essential in order to develop climate change adaptation and other sustainable management strategies.

In November, training was given on conducting socioeconomic vulnerability assessments to support the sustainable management of natural resources in Albania. An outcome of the project was a new hiking trail – the Chestnut Route – designed to promote sustainable tourism in the Albanian mountains.

National Training on Mountain Vulnerability Assessment
SAPIENZA

Land degradation assessment training in Kyrgyzstan

©Department of Environmental Biology – Sapienza University of Rome

Strengthening climate negotiations in mountains

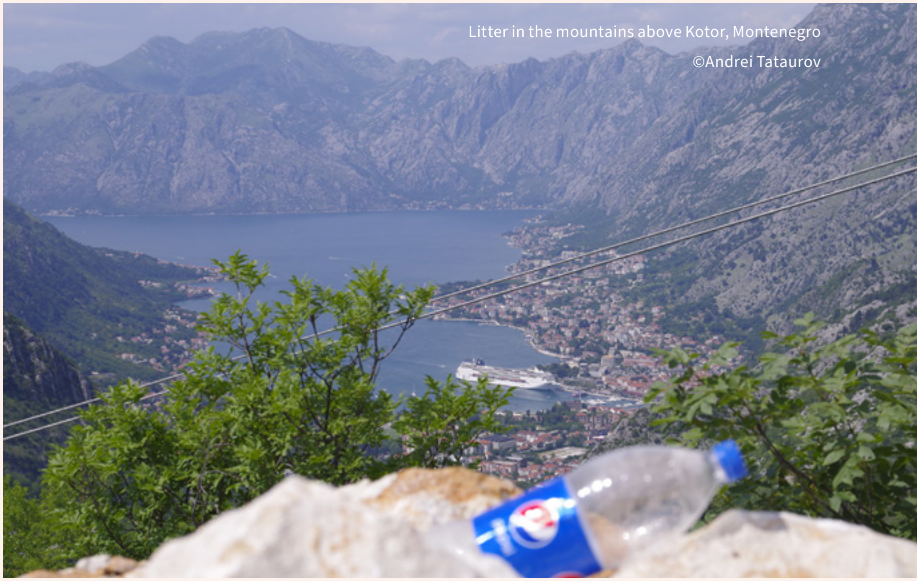
From 10 September to 2 October 2024, the United Nations Development Programme organized the "Strengthening Capacity of National Delegations to COP 29 - Regional Training on Climate Change Negotiations" training programme for countries in Europe and Central Asia. This workshop was vital in preparing national delegations for effective participation at COP 29, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate complex climate negotiations. By focusing on key aspects of international climate agreements and national commitments, the training ensures that delegates are well prepared to contribute to global discussions. The MPS participated in the session "Mountains and Climate Change in the UNFCCC process", which was aimed at advancing the mountain agenda.

Barskoon Mountains, Kyrgyzstan

©FAO/Mirbek Kadraliev

Workshop for sustainable plastic waste management

In 2024, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions organized the first-ever Global Workshop on Plastic Waste in the Mountains in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, focusing on capacity building and knowledge sharing. The workshop hosted experts from 27 countries to discuss solutions for plastic waste in mountain regions. Key discussions included the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility systems and improved recycling practices. A field visit to Dushanbe's recycling facilities provided hands-on learning opportunities. The workshop led to capacity-building recommendations, including training programmes for local communities and park rangers, and highlighted scalable solutions. Exchanging knowledge through workshops such as this is an effective way to learn and implement new sustainable practices and innovative solutions for plastic waste management in mountain regions.



Litter in the mountains above Kotor, Montenegro

©Andrei Tataurov

Participants in the workshop for sustainable plastic waste management

©Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

Smokeless cookstoves for Himalayan communities

In the Indian Himalayas, a project run by the Central Himalayan Institute for Nature & Applied Research promotes the adoption of energy-efficient, smokeless stoves. By training local masons to build smokeless stoves, the "Clean Energy Solutions for Improvement of Ecosystem, Workload, and Health of Mountain Women in the Western Indian Himalayas" project ensures sustainability and empowers communities to burn less fuel in the home. The initiative has directly benefited 228 families (1 368 individuals) and indirectly impacted 5 000 more through awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building sessions. With 100 smokeless stoves installed, the project has reduced fuelwood consumption by 40 percent, helped to alleviate the workload of women, improved health and strengthened ecosystem services.

Woman using smokeless cookstove, India
©Geeta Sharma (CHINAR India)

Chile supports sustainable mountain tourism in the Andes

The Andes Santiago programme, supported by the Chilean economic development agency and the Santiago Regional Government, is driving efforts to promote sustainable mountain tourism in the Andes. Central to the strategy is the establishment of internationally certified mountain leader programmes and the creation of a Mountain Tourism Academy, enhancing the skills of adventure tourism professionals. The Santiago Metropolitan Region's Master Plan for Infrastructure is another milestone, with a new mountain hut built at the base of Tupungato Mountain.

Group of participants from mountain leader programme in Chile

©AndesSantiago
@transformaturismo

Mountain lake in Chile

©AndesSantiago
@transformaturismo

Mountain champions and the power of partnerships

Kyrgyz Nomad Trail, Kyrgyzstan
©Yuval Yellin

The strength of the MP lies in our collective power: a diverse network of governments, NGOs, civil society and the private sector working together towards a shared vision of sustainable development. In 2024, we welcomed 77 new Members, further strengthening our ability to drive meaningful change.

This expansion, combined with deepened partnerships, has unlocked exciting new opportunities for action. From supporting local communities to fostering the science-policy nexus, the MP works in a circular manner, ensuring that the voice and the actions of our diverse stakeholders reach the global stage.

The work of the Secretariat would not be possible without the strategic vision and generous support of our key resource partners. Their financial contributions and institutional backing are crucial in advancing our mission.

Italy

Italy was instrumental in the MPS' establishment in 2002 and has funded the Secretariat since its inception through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, ensuring the sustainable development of mountain regions. Both financially and strategically, Italy supports all facets of the MPS, contributing to projects and activities that address the challenges of mountain communities.

Switzerland

Switzerland, a steadfast supporter, channels its funding through the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG), supporting the Mountain Partnership Secretariat in all its activities. Its contributions fund projects are aimed at the sustainable development of mountain regions, promoting climate resilience and enhancing local livelihoods. Switzerland's involvement was also key in establishing the MPS in 2002, and its support continues to drive global efforts for mountain ecosystems.

Andorra

Andorra continues to provide an in-kind contribution through the secondment of a policy officer and remains a strong supporter of the MPS and key actor in advancing sustainable mountain development.

FAO

As the lead UN agency for mountains and host of the MPS, FAO remains a pillar of support, offering both institutional, technical and financial assistance to enhance our global impact.

Ireland

Ireland joined as a donor in 2024, funding activities in Palau, including the project "Empowering women in Palau's sustainable agricultural sectors: Bridging tradition and sustainability through gender equality", within the broader Food and Tourism Itineraries in the Pacific SIDS programme.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan, a key advocate for mountain issues, contributed to MPS activities in 2024, reinforcing its strategic partnership and support for the Mountain Agenda under the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023–2027.

These donors' collective commitment, alongside the expertise of our entire membership, enables the MPS to expand its efforts in policy, research and innovation for mountain ecosystems and communities, strengthening global initiatives, building capacity and driving sustainable development, to ensure no one is left behind.

Dischma Valley, Switzerland
©Evgeni Dimitrov

Global Meeting, Aspen, United States of America

©Matt TenBruggencate/Earth Negotiations

Steering Committee

The MP's Steering Committee offers programmatic guidance, overseeing the development of a four-year strategy and a two-year work plan. This 18-member committee steers the work of the MPS and implementation of the mountain agenda, tracking the achievements and impacts of their respective electoral groups. Members are elected for four-year terms by the different membership categories and regions, and they appoint a chair and vice-chairs during their first meeting. The committee convenes at least once a year to review progress and set priorities.

Donor organization to the MPS

- Italy (Chair)

Governments

- Asia and the Pacific: Nepal
- Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan
- Europe: Andorra, Romania (alternate)
- Near East and North Africa: Yemen
- North and Central America and the Caribbean: The Dominican Republic (Vice Chair), Guatemala (alternate)
- South America: Peru, Argentina (alternate)
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Malawi, Uganda (alternate)

Host institution of the MPS

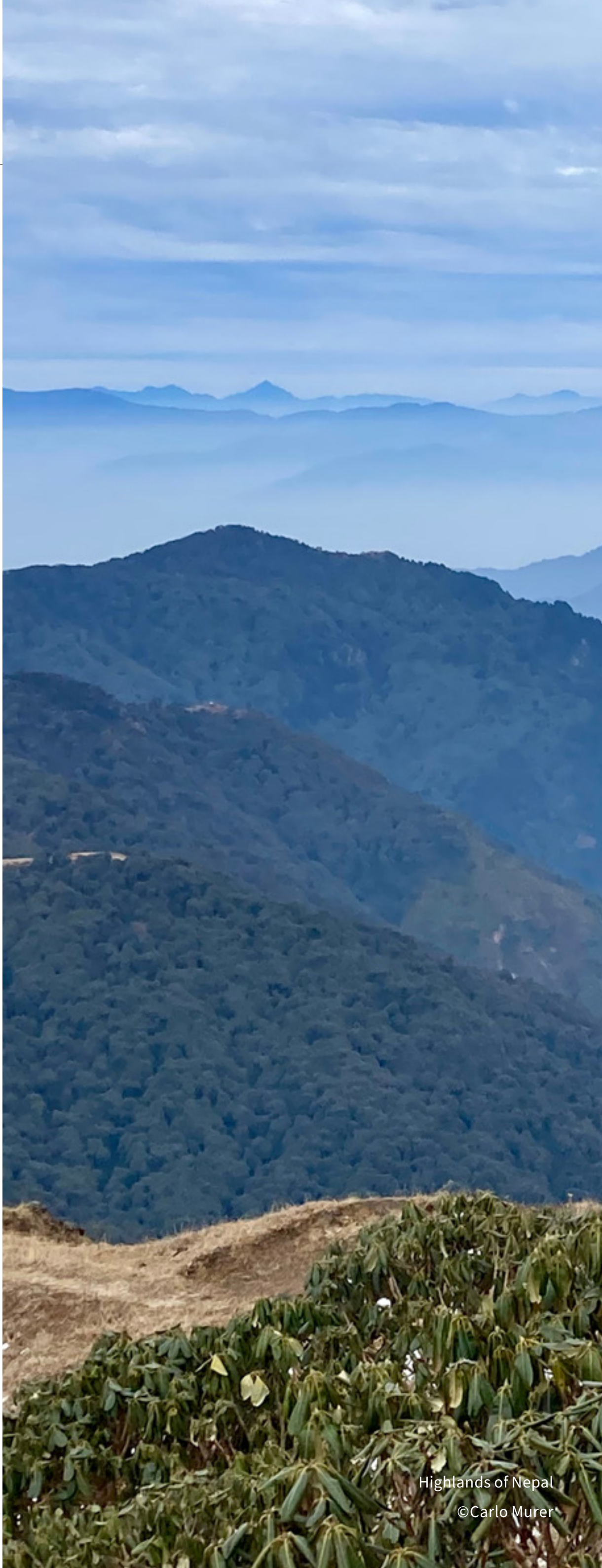
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Intergovernmental organization

- United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations University (alternate)

Major group organizations

- Asia and the Pacific: Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (Vice Chair), Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation (alternate)
- Central Asia: Tajik Social and Ecological Union, Rural Development Fund (alternate)
- Europe: Centro de Investigação de Montanha and Euromontana, Albanian Alps Alliance (alternate)
- Global civil society organization: GRID-Arendal, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (alternate)
- Near East and North Africa: Coalition Civile pour la Montagne, Mountain Environment Protection Society (alternate)
- North and Central America and the Caribbean: Aspen International Mountain Foundation
- South America: Centro de Estudios de Alta Montaña, Crescente Fértil (alternate)
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Foundation for Environment and Development

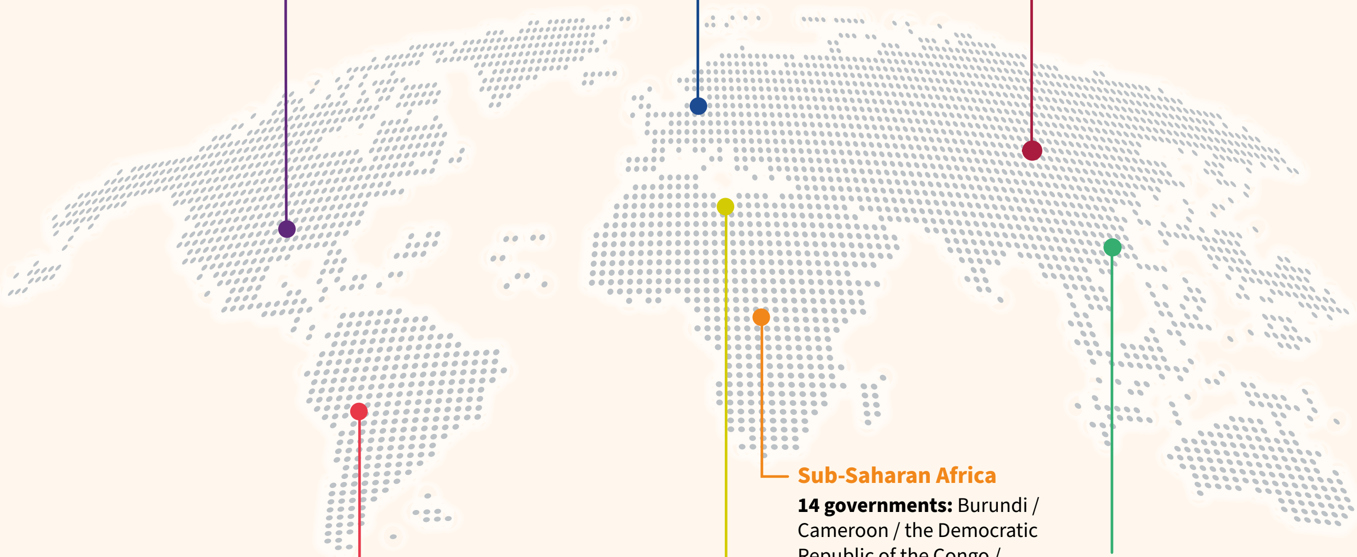


Highlands of Nepal

©Carlo Murer

United for mountains – the Mountain Partnership community

At the end of December 2024, the following **603 governments and organizations** were Members of the Mountain Partnership:



North & Central America and the Caribbean

7 governments: Costa Rica / Cuba / the Dominican Republic / Guatemala / Jamaica / Mexico / Panama

+ 51 NGOs + 6 subnational authorities

Europe

19 governments: Andorra / Armenia / Austria / Azerbaijan / France / Georgia / Italy / Liechtenstein / Monaco / Montenegro / North Macedonia / Romania / Serbia / Slovakia / Slovenia / Spain / Switzerland / Türkiye / Ukraine

+ 53 NGOs + 1 subnational authority

Central Asia

3 governments: Kyrgyzstan / Tajikistan / State Committee on Forestry of Republic of Uzbekistan

+ 53 NGOs + 1 subnational authority

South America

7 governments: Argentina / the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela / Chile / Colombia / Ecuador / Peru / the Plurinational State of Bolivia

+ 51 NGOs

Near East and North Africa

7 governments: Algeria / the Islamic Republic of Iran / Jordan / Morocco / Sudan / Tunisia / Yemen

+ 12 NGOs

Sub-Saharan Africa

14 governments: Burundi / Cameroon / the Democratic Republic of the Congo / Eswatini / Ethiopia / Ghana / Guinea / Kenya / Lesotho / Madagascar / Malawi / Nigeria Federal Ministry of Environment / Togo / Uganda

+ 12 NGOs

Asia and the Pacific

11 governments: Afghanistan / Bangladesh / Bhutan / India / Indonesia / Korea Forest Service / Nepal / Pakistan / Papua New Guinea / the Philippines / Sri Lanka

+ 123 NGOs + 3 subnational authorities

Global

23 intergovernmental organizations

39 global major groups

Gloria Gonzalez in traditional Guatemalan attire, La Antigua
©CharlieQuezada-CoheteStudio

Meet the Secretariat

The Mountain Partnership is supported by a Secretariat hosted at FAO and is sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability of the Principality of Andorra, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Office of Agriculture, and FAO.

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11 December
INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY
2024
11 December
International
MOUNTAIN DAY
2024
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Mountain Partnership
Slow Food

Mountain Partnership Secretariat team

©FAO/Roberto Cenciarelli

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Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

Govern d'Andorra

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